RURAL TOURISM ACTIVITIES ON AGRITOURISM CROP FARMS

ACTIVITĂȚI DE TURISM RURAL LA FERMELE AGROTURISTICE VEGETALE

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***Abstract**: A free lancer in rural tourism who owns an agritourism crop farm should figure out with accuracy the tourism needs to be met by his tourism product or service, trying to answer the following answers: Who is the typical customer (tenant or owner, bachelor or parent, businessman or employee, etc.) to purchase the tourism product/service? What type of tourism product/service will sell? Does the public wish to buy this tourism product/service? Why (availability, location, price, selection, personalised services) does the free lancer think the customer will purchase from him and not from somebody else? Where (local, county, regional, national, international community) will the customers come from? The farmer needs to detail the calendar of agritourism activities over an entire year so that the consumers get to know and organise in optimal conditions the stay on an agritourism crop farm.*

***Key words**: crop farm, rural tourism, farm activities*

INTRODUCTION

For a crop farm to carry out agritourism activities in optimal conditions it is absolutely necessary to go through the following:

a) **Analysis of host potential**:
   - whether the farmer and his farm can always be cheerful and willing to be available for the visitors;
   - whether the farmer and his family can always keep the farm and farm facilities in order and clean for the visitors;
   - whether the farmer and his family manage to administer and organise well home and farm expenses;
   - whether the farmer and his family agree to give up some of their privacy;
   - whether the farmer and his family like to meet all kinds of people;
   - whether the farmer and his family like to talk to complete strangers.

At this stage, the farmer also needs to weigh both the advantages and the disadvantages of any nature of introducing agritourism among his activities:

- ***advantages of introducing agritourism among his activities***: agritourism activities are carried out at small scale; agritourism activities are relatively cheap; the farmer can develop interpersonal and communication abilities; the farmer can share his lifestyle (challenges and successes); his sources of income diversify and increase; the visitors represent a market for high valorisation but small volume;
- ***disadvantages of introducing agritourism among his activities***: developing supplementary facilities for the tourists can ask for supplementary money and time; the planning of agritourism activities can be boring and frustrating; the practice of agritourism can have a negative impact on some of the family members; the practice of agritourism can ask for supplementary money and time; the presence of visitors on the farm can be a supplementary risk; the production of new products and services is a long lasting process (2, 4).

b) ***The goals and objectives of introducing agritourism as basic activity on a crop farm*** should coincide with the already established goals and objectives of the crop farm, such as controlling costs, increasing farm incomes through crop improvement (5, 6);
c) ***Identifying external resources***, i.e. people with experience in the field of implementing agritourism projects: a farmer from the area who already practices agritourism successfully; an extension unit; the chamber of commerce of the county that can promote agritourism activities at county level; a programme of academic extension with the same attributions as the extension unit; a local or regional travel office.
d) ***Assessing internal sources***, i.e. inventorying all the products, services, and resources (physical, natural, human, etc.) that a crop farm can offer.
e) ***Developing a business plan*** in case the farmer wishes to turn his crop farm into an agritourism crop farm.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

In this paper, we investigate the main types of crops in the rural area and the possible activities to be carried out over an entire year aiming at attracting tourism consumers from both the urban and the rural area, particularly young people (children) attending different types of school education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the case of **agritourism crop farms**, the most popular type of activity for both children and adults is "**pick it with your own hand**", a type of **recreation tourism** (1, 3) bringing incomes (for the farmers). Tabele1 presents a model of organisation per months of agritourism activities on an **agritourism crop farm**.

Table 1.

Organisation per months of agritourism activities on an agritourism crop farm

Month	Type of crop
January	Hydroponic culture
February	Hydroponic culture
March	Preparing spring crops
April	Setting vegetable plots
May	Picking green salad
June	Picking strawberries
July	Picking raspberries
August	Picking tomatoes
September	Picking apples
October	Picking pumpkins
November	Cutting Christmas trees
December	Decorating Christmas trees

Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5 present individualised seasonal calendars for **agricultural activities programmes** useful for both the farmer and the teachers that organise the visiting of agritourism crop farms for children. The seasonal calendars presented below (to which the date and participants should also be added) are specific to the climate soil and conditions of Romania.

Table 2.

Spring seasonal calendar for agricultural activities programme

Activity	Description
Instructing the teachers	- theory and practice of cultivating vegetables - introduction of healthy foods - making tools from natural items
Instructing the parents	- lecture by a vegetable grower + planning the menu - lecture on healthy nutrition + exhibition and tasting organic agricultural produce
Cultivating seeds	- green salad
Planting seedlings	- green peppers - tomatoes
Picking	- strawberries, cherries + tasting + preparing fruit preserves (in syrup, jam)

Table 3.

Summer seasonal calendar for agricultural activities programme

Activity	**Description**
Instructing cooks and nutritionists	- lectures on the importance of foods + the story of the agricultural producer + cooking demonstration and testing of dishes
Weeding	- preliminary explanations on weeding + weeding proper
Maintaining agricultural machines	- cleaning a tractor - cleaning a combine - repairs
Picking	- apricots, apples, pears, peaches + tasting + preparing fruit preserves (in syrup, jam) - maize + technique of boiling and roasting maize
Wheat harvesting	- instrumental folk music + harvesting - walking through the wheat field + threshing the wheat - wheat wreathing + bread baking
Organic agriculture	- lecture of organic agriculture + weeding

Table 4.

Autumn seasonal calendar for agricultural activities programme

Activity	**Description**
Instructing teachers	- theory and practice of cultivating vegetables - healthy nutrition + importance of nature
School canteen manager	- lectures on environmental-friendly foods + picking pears
Potato picking	- lectures on potato-based dishes + potato picking - cooking potatoes
Apple picking	- lecture by an apple grower - picking apples + preparing apple jam and apple juice
Pear picking	- lecture by pear growers - picking pears + tasting natural pear juice - catching grasshoppers - walking through the village
Cooking festival	- cooking for kindergarten children

Harvest festival	- instrumental folk music - exhibition of agro-alimentary produce
Preparing pickles	- lectures by cucumber, pepperoni, and cabbage growers - preparing pickles + tasting traditional foods
Natural dying	- differentiating natural dying and artificial dying + introducing traditional dying (onion sheets, walnut leaves, etc.)

Table 5.

Winter seasonal calendar for agricultural activities programme

Activity	**Description**
Instructing the parents	- lecture by pork producers - lecture about healthy nutrition + planning the menu - tasting environmental-friendly foods
Christmas festival	- Christmas carols sung by the children - offers by the farmers to the children: sweets + walnuts + sweet breads + pork cold cuts
New Year's festival	- traditional songs sung by the children (*pluguşor*) - sweets offered by the farmers to the children

Harvest Festival is a good opportunity for the children to visit agritourism crop farms. Here are a few suggestions of activities for very young schoolchildren (1):

- vegetable bingo (played with cards with vegetables names/drawings on them);
- confectioning "faces" from old socks filled with earth and grass seeds;
- confectioning hair banderoles from raffia fibber, flowers, and ribbons;
- confectioning seed bags from newspaper paper;
- confectioning bookmarks from waxed paper and dried pressed flowers;
- confectioning raw potato stamps;
- "card" games with buds, roots, seeds, stems, etc.;
- tracing leaf contours on paper;

- preparing vegetable seedlings;
- pressing flowers for greeting cards;
- carving vegetable items.

The suggestions for a possible programme of a **visit to an agritourism animal farm for schoolchildren** should take into account mainly the localities in which **agritourism** could become "**the main economic activity**" and then the localities in which **agritourism** could become "**the activity specific to the area**".

The next step is to identify the areas in which agriculture is to identify the localities in which **agritourism** could become "**the main economic activity**" (none of the localities in the Timiş County is among them) and then the localities in which **agritourism** could become "**the activity specific to the area**". Here we should include the villages in which **fruit culture** is "**the activity specific to the area**".

Since the theme of this scientific paper was not to inventory the types of crops practiced in such villages, we think that the best solution would be to pick up localities in the rural area in which **fruit culture** is practiced (to be more exact, apple and pear tree culture), but other species of fruit trees are not excluded.

CONCLUSIONS

No matter the type of agritourism farm for which a farmer may make an option, he should **assess realistically his chances of success** depending on the following criteria: local attractions, location and size of the farm, accommodation opportunities, promotion opportunities, transport opportunities, area resources, farm available resources, staff standards and goals, and available time.

The functioning of an agritourism farm implies the respect of general requirements such as knowing and consulting legislation in application, enrolling in the county fiscal administration record, obtaining a licence, homologating the crop farm with agritourism profile, organising and managing the outer areas, equipping the farm with technical and building infrastructure, and implementing specific requirements that ensure quality services and attractiveness for agritourists.

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